



Pronoun Policy

Dominican University recognizes that an individual's pronouns are more than a preference — they are forms of self-determination, self-expression, and self-affirmation. The University extends this accommodation to help foster a more welcoming, supportive, and respectful campus climate for all students.

Dominican University's pronoun policy allows any student the option to indicate their pronouns in DU information systems. Dominican University acknowledges that pronouns should be used wherever possible, and as such, pronouns will be displayed in systems that allow for that form of identification. Systems involving government verification may still list a student's assigned sex at birth. Further, certain systems may not display an individual's pronouns due to design limitations.

Definitions:

- a) Pronouns – A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (like I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, I, them, and this).
- b) Gender Pronouns – The pronouns that we use to refer to people in sentences and conversations
- c) Assigned Sex at birth – referring to the biological aspects of an individual as determined by their anatomy, which is produced by their chromosomes, hormones and their interactions
- d) Gender - a social construction relating to behaviors and attributes based on labels of masculinity and femininity; gender identity is a personal, internal perception of oneself and so the gender category someone identifies with may not match the sex they were assigned at birth

Places Where Gender Pronouns are Used:

- Class lists
- Canvas
- Most university communications
- MyDU

Places Where Assigned Sex at Birth is Used:

- Financial Aid Eligibility



- Student Employment
- Federal and State Agency Reporting

Students may designate pronouns they want to use by entering this information in the following section. Students may add, edit, or remove their pronouns at any time.

The following guidelines are provided by Springfield College:

Why are pronouns important?

- It is important to ask for pronouns because you cannot assume how someone identifies their gender based on their appearance.
- As a society, we commonly assume the gender of others by their appearance and indicate these assumptions by using gendered language, such as she/he, ma'am/sir, Ms./Mr., and ladies/gentlemen.
- This practice results in many individuals, especially trans and gender-nonconforming individuals, being misgendered, which may lead them to feel disrespected, marginalized, and invisible.
- It is a privilege to not have to worry about which pronoun someone is going to use for you based on how they perceive your gender. If you have this privilege, yet fail to respect someone else's gender identity, it is disrespectful and hurtful.

How can I be inclusive in using and respecting gender pronouns?

- Respecting someone's self-identification means using the gender pronouns with which they identify. Some people go by more than one set of pronouns.
- Normalize the process of indicating your gender pronouns in everyday use with strategies such as including them in your email signature, business cards, website profile, and nametags, or using them as you introduce yourself (i.e., "My name is Tou and my pronouns are he and him. What about you?")
- If you do not know or have not asked someone's pronouns, try to use "they/them" pronouns.
- Ask individuals (only if they are comfortable) to provide their personal pronoun(s). It can feel awkward at first, but it is not as awkward as getting it wrong or making a hurtful assumption. Here are some ways you can do this:
 - o "What pronouns do you use?"



o "How would you like me to refer to you?"

o "Can you remind me what pronouns I should be using for you?"

- Please note that if a student, staff, or community member tells you that they do not want to disclose their pronouns or do not wish their pronouns to be public knowledge, you can refer to that person by their name only (i.e., Leo's book is over there. Can you please hand it to Leo?).

What if I mistakenly use the wrong pronouns for someone?

- The best thing to do if you use the wrong pronoun for someone is to say something right away, such as "Sorry, I meant they." Fix it, but do not call special attention to the error in the moment. If you realize your mistake after the fact, apologize in private and move on.
- It can be tempting to go on and on about how bad you feel that you messed up or how hard it is for you to get it right. But please, don't. It is inappropriate and makes the person who was misgendered feel awkward and responsible for comforting you, which is not their job. It is your job to remember people's pronouns.
- If you hear someone else using the wrong pronoun, in most cases, you may gently correct the person who made the mistake without further embarrassing the individual who was misgendered. You can say something like, "Actually, Neera uses 'they' for themselves."

Pronouns Dos and Don'ts

Do!

- Do recognize that most people have pronouns, not just trans people, and that asking pronouns is very important, both so someone is not misgendered and so that trans people are not the only ones who will feel the need to share their pronouns.
- Do remember that some people go by more than one set of pronouns.
- Do ask people the pronouns they use for themselves whenever you ask people their name, such as when you meet someone for the first time or when you do go-arounds at meetings. Keep in mind that people may change the pronouns they go by, so it is necessary to ask pronouns in go-arounds regularly.



- Do say “the pronouns someone uses” or “their personal pronouns,” rather than “their preferred pronouns,” because the pronouns someone uses are not a preference.
- Do remember that not everyone feels comfortable indicating their pronouns at all or in every setting and no one should feel forced to do so.
- Do consider using other ways to make language more gender-inclusive, such as by using “Hey, everyone” or “How are all y’all doing?” in a group setting instead of “Hey guys!” or “Hey ladies!” or “How are you guys doing?” Browse more gender-inclusive terms.

Don’t!

- Don’t describe the pronouns someone uses as “preferred pronouns.” It is not a preference. The pronouns that a person uses are their pronouns and the only ones that should be used for them.
- Don’t say “male pronouns” and “female pronouns.” Pronouns are not necessarily tied to someone’s gender identity: some trans people use “he/him/his” or “she/her/her,” but do not identify as male or female, respectively.
- If you conform to (most) gender expectations and are not a transgender person, don’t indicate that you “don’t care what pronouns are used for me.” Such statements reinforce the privilege of people who are gender conforming and not transgender because these people are not going to be misgendered and thus do not need to worry about the pronouns that people use for them. It also invalidates the experiences of gender nonconforming and transgender people, many of whom struggle with getting people to use their correct pronouns.

We welcome your feedback:

Dominican University is committed to improving our practices around inclusion and equity. If you believe your pronouns are being incorrectly used or if you have any questions or concerns related to the pronoun policy, reach out to the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at pporras@dom.edu